A note on "the Hierarchy in the Priestly Community of Rigved"

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Dictionary meaning of the word **hierarchy** is a system in which people or things are ranked in order of status, authority, or importance. To understand **hierarchy of Vedic period**, following **Last Mandala verse** is chosen as it would serve as the base for the present note.

Rv-10.125,5: *ahameva svayamidaṃ vadāmi juṣṭaṃ devebhirutamānuṣebhiḥ* |
*yaṃ kāmaye taṃ-tamughraṃ kṛṇomi tam**brahmāṇaṃ** taṃ **ṛṣiṃ** taṃ **sumedhām*** ||

अहमेव स्वयमिदं वदामि जुष्टं देवेभिरुत मानुषेभिः । यं कामये तंतमुग्रं कृणोमि तं **ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम् ॥**

In the above verse, our main focus is on the **three key terms** i. e. **Brahmana**, **Rishi** and **Sumedha**. Unfortunately, **Griffith** [1] in his translation, has changed the order of these **three characters** mentioned in the Sanskrit verse to **Sage**, **Rishi** and **Brahman** as given below.

I, verily, myself announce and utter the word that Gods and men alike shall welcome.

I make the man I love exceeding mighty, make him a **Sage**, a **Rsi**, and a **Brahman**.

The hymn **Rv-10.125** is also known as **Vak Suktam** as it is addressed to Goddess **Vak/Speech**, and the content of the hymn manifests that the Poet does not refer to normal or regular speech, but the **mind stirring words** spoken by the **Rigvedic Priests**. In other words, when the **Divine Thoughts** and **Speech** (**वाक्**) work together, then their **synergistic action** result in coherent divine message in the form of **mystical utterance/sound** or ***Vak*/*Vani***.

From the contents of several Rigvedic hymns, it is crystal clear that various Composers have successfully used their creativity to express their emotional attachments to the **Divine Beings of their likings** and then translated their abstract ideas into the **Poems of Praise** using **different structural formats** (means **metres**) using **richness of archaic lyrical language**.

As mentioned earlier, three Vedic characters namely; **Brahmana**, **Rishi** and **Sumedha** use the **power of Speech** to express themselves, then it is necessary to know why did the Rigvedic Composers give ***differential treatment*** to these three Priestly characters? Or how did the Poets place them in the **hierarchical structure of the Priestly Community?** In the present note, one by one, we will study and discuss the vital features of following **Vedic characters**.

A. **Brahman/Brahmin**
B. **Rishi**
C. **Sumedha**

A. Brahmana or Brahmin/ ब्राह्मणम्:

In the verse given below, the Poet of **Late Mandala** has brought out the difficulty experienced by a **Common Man** while interpreting the **speech of Brahmana/Brahmin**.

The Composer of the famous Riddle hymn **Rv-1.164** has highlighted a major difference existed between understanding of a **common man** who also **speaks archaic Sanskrit** and the **Brahmana/Brahmin** who regularly recites **mantras** at the time of **Yajna** rite.

Rv-1.164,45: ***catvāri vāk*** *parimitā* ***padāni tāni*** *vidur****brāhmaṇā*** *ye manīṣiṇaḥ* |
guhā trīṇi nihitā neṅghayanti turīyaṃ ***vāco manuṣyā vadanti*** ||

Speech hath been measured out in **four divisions**, **the Brahmans who have understanding know them**.
Three kept in **close concealment cause no motion**; of speech, **men speak only the fourth division**.

As per the Poet, when a spoken verse is divided into four separate parts/***padas***, then an **ordinary person** can know only one-fourth part of it, meaning thereby, he cannot grasp the complete message or concept hidden in the **oral text** as he knows meanings of a few words (familiar with limited vocabulary) that are regularly used by him and only the **Brahmana** can understand the content of the spoken verse thoroughly. In other words, **Brahmana/Brahmin** who has been trained by a **Senior Priest** can realize the meaning of a **Praise-song** properly.

What did Brahmana/Brahmin do during the Rigvedic Period?

Following verses describe the various roles a ***Brahmana/Brahmin*** performed during the time of **Rigved**.

Rv-2.36,5: *eṣa sya te tanvo nṛmṇavardhanaḥ saha ojaḥ pradivi bāhvorhitaḥ* |
tubhyaṃ suto ***maghavan*** *tubhyamābhṛtastvamasya* ***brāhmanādā*** *tṛpat piba* ||

This is the strengthener of thy body's manly might: strength, victory for all time are placed within thine arms.
Pressed for thee, Maghavan, it is offered unto thee: drink from the **chalice of this Brahman**, drink thy fill.

Comment: In the above verse, the Composer requests **Indra/Maghavan** to drink (**Soma**) juice from the **cup of Brahmana**. It means to say that the **Brahmana** was **given a task** to prepare a **Soma juice** for the Deities and other people who attended **Yajna** ritual.

Rv-7.103,8: ***brāhmaṇāsaḥ somino*** *vācamakrata brahma kṛṇvantaḥ parivatsarīṇam* |
adhvaryavo *garmiṇaḥ siṣvidānā āvirbhavanti* ***guhyā*** *na ke cit* ||

These **Brahmans with the Soma juice**, performing their **year-long rite**, **have lifted up their voices**.

And these **Adhvaryus**, sweating with their kettles, come forth and show themselves, and none are hidden.

Comment: The Poet of the above verse has made it further clear that the **Brahmanas** who are fully involved as the Priests (***Adhvaryu*** /**अध्वर्यु**) in a **very long Yajna ritual** have raised **their voices** means started **chanting mantras loudly**, holding the jars of **Soma juice** with them, sweating in front of the ritual fire. It means to say that **some Brahmanas** were directly responsible for the execution of sacrificial rite including the preparation of **Soma Juice**.

Rv-8.32,16: *na nūnaṃ* ***brahmaṇāṃ*** *ṛṇaṃ prāśūnāmasti sunvatām* | *na somo apratā pape* ||

No debt is due by **Brahmans now**, by **active men who press the juice**.

Well hath each Soma-draught been paid.

Comment: Here the Poet says that there is **no debt** due to the **Brahmanas** now, who had pressed the **Soma juice for all**. This is because, they have been given suitable gifts for their work. In other words, **Brahmanas** were aptly rewarded for the preparation of **Soma juice**.

Rv-8.58,1: *yaṃ ṛtvijo bahudhā kalpayantaḥ sacetaso yajñamimaṃ vahanti* |
yo ***anūcāno brāhmaṇo*** *yukta āsīt kā svit tatra yajamānasya saṃvit* ||

He whom the priests in sundry ways arranging the sacrifice, of one accord, bring hither.

Who was appointed as a learned Brahman, -what is the **sacrificer's knowledge of him**?

Comment: Through the above verse, the Composer informs us that a **learned Brahmana** was told to **sing the song** means he was engaged in the **Yajna ritual as a reciter**.

Rv-10.71,8: *hṛdā taṣṭeṣu manaso javeṣu yad* ***brāhmaṇāḥ saṃyajantesakhāyaḥ*** |
*atrāha tvaṃ vi j****ahurvedyābhirohabrahmāṇo*** *vicarantyu tve* ||

When **friendly Brahmans sacrifice** together with mental impulse which the heart hath fashioned.

They leave one far behind through their attainments, and some who count as **Brahmans wander elsewhere**.

Comment: In the above verse, the Composer tells us that the **like-minded Brahmanas/Brahmins** come together to perform **Yajna rite**. On the other hand, those **Brahmins** who are jealous of the men involved in sacrifice, wander here and there and make some adverse comments (gossip) on the **Yajna performers**. It means to say that, in the **Rigvedic Brahmin Community**, there were some **backbiters/defamers/critics** too.

Rv-10.71,9: *ime ye nārvāṃ na paraścaranti na **brāhmaṇāso** nasutekarāsaḥ |*
*ta ete **vācamabhipady**a pāpayā sirīstantraṃ tanvate aprajajñayaḥ |*

Those men who step not back and move not forward**, nor Brahmans nor preparers of libations**.

Having attained to **Vak in sinful fashion** spin out their thread in ignorance like spinsters.

Comment: Through the above verse, the Composer has pointed out the fact that there are some **Brahmanas/Brahmins** who neither take the lead in conducting **Yajna rite**, nor press the **Soma** juice, but **can recite mantras,** add nothing to the sacred rite. Ideally speaking, **every Brahmin** must know how to prepare **Soma juice**, and throw himself in the overall preparation of **Yajna** ritual including making the fire altar. If a **Brahmin only knows** how to chant mantra, then he is fit for nothing or reciting a praise-song is not enough to qualify a person as a **Vedic Brahmin**.

Rv-10.97,22: ***oṣadhayaḥ** saṃ vadante **somena saha rājñā** |*
*yasmai **kṛṇotibrāhmaṇastaṃ** rājan pārayāmasi ||*

With **Soma as their Sovran Lord** the Plants hold colloquy and say.

O King, we save from death the man whose cure a **Brahman undertakes**.

Comment: In the above verse, the Poet states that all **Herbs/Plants** are in agreement with **Soma**, the king of Plant world. These Herbs/Plants are ready to serve as a **curer** to whom a **Brahmana/Brahmin** wants to treat. Here the role of **Brahmin** is **Vaidya** (**वैद्य**) or **Physician**.

From the contents of the above verses, it is evident that during the Rigvedic period, a **Brahmana/Brahmin** was assigned **multiple tasks** and those are listed below.

- **Pressing and preparing Soma Juice**.
- **Making arrangements for Yajna ritual including preparation of fire altar**.
- **Reciting Mantras composed by other Poets at the time of Yajna**.
- **Acted as *Adhvaryu* /अध्वर्यु means Priest to the Head Priest**.
- **Worked as Vaidya/physician**.

As mentioned in the verse **Rv-1.164,45;** the **Brahmana** can easily understand the **songs of praise**, means since his childhood, he was schooled by some **Senior Priest** in the various areas of Vedic ritual including **ancient Poetry** and that is why **possesses rich vocabulary**.

B. Rishi/ ऋषि:

In this section we would try to know what the generations of Rigvedic Composers have spoken about the term **Rishi** in their songs composed in different times.

Rv-6.44,13: ***adhvaryo*** *vīra pra mahe sutānāmindrāya bhara sa hyasya rājā* |
yaḥ pūrvyābhiruta nūtanābhirghīrbhirvāvṛdhe ***gṛṇatāṃ ṛṣīṇām*** ||

अध्वर्यो वीर॒ प्र म॒हे सु॒ताना॒मिन्द्रा॑य भर॒ स ह्यस्य॒ राजा॑ । यः पू॒र्व्याभि॑रु॒त नूत॑नाभिर्गी॒र्भिर्वा॑वृ॒धे गृ॑ण॒तामृषी॑णाम् ॥

Adhvaryu, hero, bring to **mighty Indra** for **he is King** there of-the pressed-out juices.

To him exalted by the hymns and praises, ancient and modern, of the singing Rsis.

Comment: The Poet of above verse tells ***Adhvaryu***/Priest to offer **Soma juice** to mighty **Indra** as the God has become strong due to **old and new praise-songs sung by many Rishis**. It means to say that **composing hymns** and **singing old** or **new songs** was the **main job of Rishis**.

Rv-6.18,14: *tamu tvā* ***dadhyaṃṃ ṛṣiḥ putra īdhe atharvaṇaḥ*** |*vṛtrahaṇaṃ purandaram* ||

Thee. Vrtra's slayer, breaker down of castles, hath **Atharvan's son, Dadhyac the Rsi**, lighted up

Comment: Here the Poet states that **Rishi Dadhyac** is the **son** of **Atharvan.** It is to be noted here that both characters (father and son called as **Rishis**) lived during **pre-Rigvedic time**.

Rv-7.22,9: ***ye ca pūrva ṛṣayo ye ca nūtnā*** *indra* ***brahmāṇi janayanta*** *viprāḥ* |
asme te santu sakhyā śivāni yūyaṃ pāta swastibhih sada nah ||

ये च॒ पूर्व॒ ऋष॑यो॒ ये च॒ नूत्ना॒ इन्द्र॒ ब्रह्मा॑णि ज॒नय॑न्त॒ विप्रा॑ः । अ॒स्मे ते॑ सन्तु स॒ख्या शि॒वानि॑ यू॒यं पा॑त स्व॒स्ति॒भि॒ः सदा॑ नः ॥

Among all Rsis, Indra, old and recent, who have engendered **hymns as sacred singers**.

Even with us be thine auspicious **friendships**. Ye Gods, **preserve** us evermore with **blessings**.

Comment: In the above verse, the Poet requests **Indra** be friendly with **all Rishis whether old** or **recent time as they composed praise-songs for you**, and hence bless and protect them.

Rv-5.44,8: *jyāyāṃsam asya yatunasya ketuna* ***ṛṣisvaraṃ*** *carati yāsu nāma te* |
yādṛśmin dhāyi tam apasyayā vidad ya u svayaṃ vahate so araṃ karat ||

ज्यायाँस॒मस्य य॒तुन॑स्य के॒तुनं ऋषिस्व॒रं च॑रति॒ यासु॒ नाम॑ ते । या॒दृश्मि॒न्धायि॒ तम॑प॒स्यया॑ विद॒द्य उ॑ स्व॒यं वह॑ते॒ सो अर॑ं करत् ॥

Thy name, **sung forth by Rsis in these hymns of ours**, goes to the loftier One with this swift mover's light.

By skill he wins the boon whereon his heart is set, he who bestirs himself shall bring the thing to pass.

Comment: Mandala-5 Composer in the above verse, informs us that **some undefined Rishis have sung his hymns** in favour of the God in the loud voice.

Rv-8.3,4: ***ayaṃ sahasraṃ ṛṣibhiḥ*** *sahaskṛtaḥ samudra iva paprathe* |
satyaḥ so asya mahimā gṛṇe śavo yajñeṣu viprarājye ||

अ॒यं स॒हस्र॒मृषि॑भि॒ः सहं॑स्कृतः समु॒द्र इ॑व पप्रथे । स॒त्यः सो अ॑स्य महि॒मा गृ॑णे॒ शवो॑ य॒ज्ञेषु॑ विप्र॒राज्ये॑ ॥

He, **with his might enhanced by Rsis thousand-fold**, hath like an ocean spread himself.
His majesty is praised as true at solemn rites, his power where holy singers rule

Comment: Here the **thousand Rishis** (means many) have increased **Indra's** strength and fame **through their praise-songs**. It means to say that, on the occasion of **Yajna** ritual, **some inspired Rishis composed and sang** the **special songs** just to glorify **Indra**.

Rv-8.6,12: *ye tvāmindra na* ***tuṣṭuvurṣayo*** *ye ca tuṣṭuvuḥ | mamedvardhasva suṣṭutaḥ* ||

ये त्वामिं॑न्द्र न तुं॑ष्टु॒वुॠ॑षयो॒ ये च॑ तुष्टु॒वुः । ममेद्व॑र्धस्व सुष्टु॑तः ॥

 # Whatever Rsis have not praised thee, Indra, or have lauded thee, By me exalted wax thou strong.

Comment: Here the Composer tells **Indra** whether **some Rishis praise you** and **some do not**, but you must grow strong as **he (Poet) is for the God**.

Rv-8.8,8: *kimanye paryāsate.asmat stomebhiraśvinā* |
putraḥ kaṇvasya vāṃ ṛṣirgīrbhirvatso *avīvṛdhat* ||

किम॒न्ये पर्यासते॒ऽस्मत्स्तोमे॑भि॒रश्वि॑नां । पु॒त्रः कण्व॑स्य वा॒मृषि॑र्गी॒र्भिर्व॒त्सो अ॑वीवृधत् ॥

Do others more than we adore the **Asvins with their hymns of praise**?
The Rsi Vatsa, Kanva's son, hath **magnified you with his songs.**

Comment: Rishi Vatsa, the son of **Kanva** who admires **Asvins** with **his poem**.

Rv-8.8,15: *yo vāṃ nāsatyāv* ***ṛṣirghīrbhirvatso*** *avīvṛdhat* |
tasmai sahasranirṇijamiṣaṃ dhattaṃ ghṛtaścutam ||

यो वां॑ नासत्या॒वृषि॑र्गी॒र्भिर्व॒त्सो अवी॑वृधत् । तस्मै॑ स॒हस्र॑निर्णिज॒मिष॑ं धत्तं घृत॒श्चुत॑म् ॥

Vatsa the Rsi with his songs, **Nasatyas, hath exalted you**.

Grant him rich food distilling oil, graced with a thousand ornaments.

Comment: Rishi Vatsa lauds **Nasatyas** with **his songs** during special **Yajna**.

Rv-8.9,7: *ā nūnamaśvino**rṣiḥ** stomaṃ ciketa vāmayā* |

*ā somaṃ madhumattamaṃ **gharmaṃ** siñcād**atharvaṇi*** ||

आ नू॒नम॒श्विनो॒रृषि॒ः स्तोमं॑ चिकेत वा॒मया॑ । आ सोम॒ं मधु॑मत्तमं घ॒र्मं सिं॑ञ्चा॒दथ॑र्वणि ॥

Now hath the Rsi splendidly thought out the Asvins' hymn of praise.

Let the Atharvan pour the warm oblation forth, and Soma very rich in sweets.

Comment: This **Rishi** has composed the **hymn of praise** specifically for **Asvins**. **Atharvan** (Priest) would offer **hot milk** (***gharma***) and **Soma** as oblation in the ritual.

Rv-8.9,10: *yadvāṃ **kakṣīvānuta** yad **vyaśva ṛṣiryadvāṃ dīrghatamā juhāva** |*

pṛthī yad vāṃ vainyaḥ sādaneṣvevedato aśvinā cetayethām ||

यद्वां॑ क॒क्षीवां॑ँ उ॒त यद्व्यश्व॒ ऋषि॒र्यद्वां॑ दी॒र्घतमा जु॒हाव॑ । पृथी॒ यद्वां॑ वै॒न्यः सादं॑नेष्वे॒वेदतो॑ अश्विना चेतयेथाम् ॥

As **erst Kaksivan** and the **Rsi Vyasva**, as **erst Dirghatamas invoked your presence**.

Or, in the sacrificial chambers, Vainya Prthi, so be ye mindful of us here, O Asvins.

Comment: In the hymn addressed to **Asvins**, the Composer has taken the names of **some Rishis** like **earlier Kaksivan**, **Vyasva**, **Dirghatama** and **Vainya Prithi**, **who invoked the Gods** (through their compositions) in presence of sacred fire.

Rv-8.13,25: *vardhasvā su **puruṣṭuta ṛṣiṣṭutābhirūtibhiḥ** |*

dhukṣasvapipyuṣīmiṣamavā ca naḥ ||

वर्ध॑स्वा॒ सु पु॑रुष्टुत॒ ऋषि॑ष्टुताभिरू॒तिभि॑ः । धु॒क्षस्वं पि॒प्युषी॒मिष॒मवा॑ च नः ॥

Wax mighty, thou **whom many laud** for aids **which Rsis have extolled**.

Pour down for us **abundant food and guard us well**.

Comment: The Poet appeals to **Indra** to give sufficient quantity food and protect the **Rishis who praised the God lavishly**.

Rv-8.23,24: *nūnamarca vihāyase stomebhiḥ* ***sthūrayūpavat*** | ***ṛṣe vaiyaśvadamyāyāgnaye*** ||

नूनमर्चं विहायसे स्तोमेभिः स्थूरयूपवत् । ऋषे वैयश्व दम्यायाग्नये ॥

Now sing, **as Sthurayupa sang**, with lands to him who spreadeth far.

To **Agni** of the home, **O Rsi, Vyasva's son**.

Comment: Here the Composer tells a **Rishi** who is the **son of Vyasva** to laud **Agni** in **his song**.

Rv-8.59,6*:* *indrāvaruṇā yad* ***ṛṣibhyo manīṣāṃ vāco*** *matiṃ śrutamadattamaghre* |
yāni sthānānyasṛjanta dhīrā yajñaṃ tanvānāstapasābhyapaśyam ||

इन्द्रावरुणा यदृषिभ्यो मनीषां वाचो मतिं श्रुतमदत्तमग्रे । यानि स्थानान्यसृजन्त धीरा यज्ञं तन्वानास्तपसाभ्यपश्यम् ॥

What ye in time of old **Indra and Varuna**, **gave Rsis revelation, thought, and power of song**,

And places which the **wise made, weaving sacrifice**, these through my spirit's fervid glow have I beheld.

Comment: In the above verse the Composer claims that in the ancient time, **Indra and Varuna** gave **old Rishis wisdom / thoughts** and **power** to compose song (**ऋषिभ्यो मनीषां वाचो मतिं).** Then the wise Priests made it a point to compose a new song at the time of **Yajna rite**. This verse implicitly tells us that **Yajna** and **Praise-songs** came after the creation of god **Indra**.

Rv-9.87,3*:* ***ṛṣirvipraḥ puraetā*** *janānāṃ ṛbhurdhīra uśanā kāvyena* |
sa cid viveda nihitaṃ yadāsāmapīcyaṃ guhyaṃ nāma gonām ||

ऋषिर्विप्रः पुरएता जनानामृभुर्धीरः उशना काव्येन । स चिद्विवेद निहितं यदासामपीच्यं गुह्यं नाम गोनाम् ॥

Rsi and Sage, the Champion of the people, cleft and sagacious, **Usana in wisdom**,

He hath discovered even their hidden nature, the Cows' concealed and most mysterious title.

Comment: In the above verse, the Poet has used the phrase ऋषिर्विप्रः means placed two words; **Rishi** and **Vipra** together who are ready to face the people. He further added that as **Usana** possessed **poetic skill**, he **discovered the hidden names of cows** (here the term गोनाम्/Gonam or the **names of cows** may be taken as **shaping new words/vocabulary needed for Poetry**).

Rv-9.96,18*:* ***ṛṣimanā*** *ya* ***ṛṣikṛt*** *svarṣāḥ sahasraṇīthaḥ padavīḥ* ***kavīnām*** |
tṛtīyaṃ dhāma mahiṣaḥ siṣāsan somo virājamanurājati ṣṭup ||

ऋषिमना य ऋषिकृत्स्वर्षाः सहस्रणीथः पदवीः कवीनाम् । तृतीयं धामं महिषः सिषासन्सोमो विराजमनु राजति ष्टुप् ॥

Light-winner, **Rsi-minded, Rsi-maker**, **hymned in a thousand hymns**, **Leader of sages**.

A **Steer** who strives to gain his **third form**, **Soma is, like Viraj**, resplendent as a Singer.

Comment: As per the Poet, **Soma Pavamana** the **major source of motivation of the Poets**, is the **mind of Rishi**, and also the **maker of Rishi.** Hence **He** needs to be praised in **thousand songs**. **He** is strong as Buffalo and takes the third form (unseen). **Soma** occupies the place of the king. It means that, **Soma juice** practically **inspires** the **Rishi** to compose the **praise-song**.

Rv-9.114,2: ***ṛṣe mantrakṛtāṃ*** *stomaiḥ* ***kaśyapodvardhayan*** *giraḥ* |

somaṃnamasya rājānaṃ yo jajñe vīrudhāṃ patirindrāyendo parisrava ||

ऋषे॑ मन्त्र॒कृता॒ं स्तोमै॒ः कश्य॑पोद्ब॒र्धय॒न्गिर॑ः । सोम॑ नमस्य॒ राजा॑न॒ं यो ज॒ज्ञे वी॒रुधा॒ं पति॒रिन्द्रा॑येन्दो॒ परि॑ स्रव ॥

Kasyapa Rsi, **lifting up thy voice with hymn-composers' lauds**.

Pave reverence to **King Soma born** the Sovran Ruler of the plants. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

Comment: As per the Composer, **Rishi Kashyapa** has composed a **new hymn** wherein in his voice, he lauds **Soma the king of plants** who is also believed to be the **maker of mantra**.

Rv-1.84,2: *indramid dharī vahato.apratidhṛṣṭaśavasam* |

ṛṣīṇāṃ *ca* ***stutīrupa yajñaṃ ca mānuṣāṇāṃ*** ||

इन्द्र॒मिद्धरी॑ वह॒तोऽप्र॑तिधृष्टशवसम् । ऋषी॑णां च स्तु॒तीरुप॑ य॒ज्ञं च॒ मानु॑षाणाम् ॥

His **pair of Tawny Coursers bring Indra of un-resisted might**.

Hither to **Rsis' songs of praise and sacrifice performed by men**.

Comment: Here the Poet says that the **Rishis collectively praised Indra** in the **composed songs** at the time of **Yajna** performed by the **men or son of Manu**.

Rv-10.14,15: ***yamāya madhu****mattamaṃ* ***rājñe*** *havyaṃ juhotana* |

*idaṃ nama****ṛṣibhyaḥ*** *pūrvajebhyaḥ pūrvebhyaḥ pathikṛdbhyaḥ* ||

Offer to **Yama**, to the King, oblation very rich in sweet.

Bow down before the Rsis of the ancient times, who made this path in days of old.

Comment: In the above verse, the Poet first offers the **sweet oblation** to **Yama** and then pays tribute to **ancient Rishis** who made the **path** (**practice of Yajna rite**) in **the old time**.

Rv-10.23,7: *mākirna enā sakhyā vi yauśustava cendra* ***vimadasya caṛśeḥ*** |

vidmā hi te pramatiṃ deva jāmivadasme te santusakhyā śivāni ||

मार्किर्न एना सख्या वि यौष्तवं चेन्द्र विमदस्य च ऋषेः । विद्मा हि ते प्रमतिं देव जामिवदस्मे तें सन्तु सख्या शिवानिं ॥

Never may this **bond of friendship be dissevered**, the **Rsi Vimada's and thine**.

O Indra. We know thou carest for us as a brother with us, O God, be thine auspicious friendship.

Comment: In the above verse, the Composer has mentioned the name of **Rishi** as **Vimada** who is said to be the **friend of Indra**.

Rv-10.45,12: *astāvyagnirnarāṃ suśevo* ***vaiśvānara ṛṣibhiḥsomagopāḥ*** |

adveṣe dyāvāpṛthivī huvema devā dhatta rayimasme suvīram ||

अस्तांव्यग्निर्नरां सुशेवों वैश्वानर ऋषिभिः सोमंगोपाः । अद्वेषे द्यावांपृथिवी हुंवेम देवां धत्त रयिमस्मे सुवीरंम् ॥

Agni, the Friend of men, the Soma's keeper, **Vaisvanara, hath been lauded by the Rsis**.

We will invoke benignant Earth and Heaven: ye Deities, give us wealth with hero children.

Comment: In the above verse, the Poet depicts that **Agni** is praised by the **Rishis** during **Yajna** as the God who is **friend of Men** and requests the God to give him wealth and hero children.

Rv-10.66,14: ***vasiṣṭhāsaḥ pitṛvad vācamakrata*** *devānīḷānā* ***ṛṣivatsvastaye*** |

prītā iva jñātayaḥ kāmametyāsme devāso.avadhūnutā vasu ||

वसिष्ठासः पितृवद्वाचंमक्रत देवाँ ईळांना ऋषिवत्स्वस्तयें । प्रीता इंव ज्ञातयः काममेत्यास्मे देंवासोऽवं धूनुता वसुं ॥

Vasistha's sons have raised their voices, like their **sire**, **Rsi-like praying to the Gods for happiness**.

Like friendly-minded kinsmen, come at our desire, O Gods, and shake down treasures on us from above.

Comment: The Composer of the above verse, talks about the **Singers** from the **Vasistha's family**, as the **descendants of Mandala-7 Lead Composer** collectively pray to various **Gods** for happiness, very similar to the **Rishi** (**Vasistha**) did in the past.

Rv-10.71,3: *yajñena vācaḥ padavīyamāyan tāmanvavindann****ṛṣiṣupraviṣṭām*** |

tāmābhṛtyā vyadadhuḥ purutrā tāṃ ***saptarebhā*** *abhi saṃ navante* ||

यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन तामन्वविन्दन्त्रृषिषुप्रविष्टाम | तामाभ्रत्या वयदधुः पुरुत्रा तां सप्तरेभा अभि सं नवन्ते ||

With sacrifice the trace of Vak they foIlowed, and found her harbouring within the Rsis.

They brought her, dealt her forth in many places, **seven singers** make her tones resound in concert.

Comment: Through the above verse, the Poet wants to convey us that the **Vak** or **Speech** used by the **Singers** at the time of **Yajna**, is in the **possession of the Rishis**. It is they, who **present her (Vak)** at several places only on the occasion of **Yajna**. **Seven Singers** (***Rishis***) reveal the **new forms of Speech /Vak** when sing together. In other words, the **Poetic language** used by the **Rishis** at the time of **Yajna rite** is different from the day-to-day ***VaNi*** spoken by the men.

Rv-10.81,1: *ya imā viśvā bhuvanāni juhvad **ṛṣirhotā nyasīdatpitā naḥ** |*
sa āśiṣā draviṇamichamānaḥ prathamachadavarānā viveśa ||
य इमा विश्वा भुवनानि जुह्वदृषिर्होता न्यसीदत्पिता नः । स आशिषा द्रविणमिच्छमानः प्रथमच्छदवराँ आ विवेश ॥

He who sat down as **Hotar-priest, the Rsi, our Father, offering up all things existing**.

He, seeking through his wish a great possession, came among men on earth as archetypal.

Comment: Here the Composer states that **his father** who is **Rishi** is now acting as **Hotar-priest** and offering whatever items are available there in the sacred fire/**Agni of Yajna**.

Rv-10.89,16: *purūṇi hi tvā savanā janānāṃ **brahmāṇi** mandan **ghṛṇatāmṛṣīṇām** |*
imāmāghoṣannavasā sahūtiṃ tiro viśvānarcato yāhyarvāṃ ||

पुरूणि हि त्वा सवना जनानां ब्रह्माणि मन्दंन्गृणतामृषीणाम् । इमामाघोषन्नवसा सहूतिं तिरो विश्वाँ अर्चतो याह्यर्वाङ् ॥

May plentiful libations of the people, and **singing Rsis' holy prayers rejoice thee**.

Hearing with love this common invocation, come unto us, pass by all those who praise thee.

Comment: The Composer of the hymn devoted to **Indra** in the above verse informs us that when **Soma** was being pressed by many people to offer in the **Yajna ritual**, then the **Rishis** sang the **sacred prayers/songs to invite the God for Yajna**. After hearing the request of many, **Indra** willingly arrived at the site of ritual to listen to the **mantras/chants of the Rishis**.

Rv-10.98,9: ***tvāṃ pūrva ṛṣayo*** *gīrbhirāyan tvāmadhvareṣu puruhūtaviśve |*
*sahasrāṇyadhirathānyasme ā no **yajñaṃrohidaśvopa yāhi** ||*

त्वां पूर्व ऋषयो गीर्भिरांयन्त्वामध्वरेषु पुरुहूत विश्वे । सहस्राण्यधिरथान्यस्मे आ नो यज्ञं रोहिदश्वोपं याहि ॥

 # All ancient Rsis with their songs approached thee, even thee, O Much-invoked, at sacrifices.

We have provided wagon-loads in thousands: come to the solemn rite, **Lord of Red Horses**.

Comment: Through the above verse, the Poet tells the **old story of Yajna ritual** to **Agni/** the **sacred fire**. Here the Poet reminds **Agni**, since the **ancient time, old Rishis** drew closer to the God (***Agni of Yajna***) with their **Poems of Praise** to call **him** for sacrifice, you (God) made it a point to attend the same as and when invoked. Now the Priests have made thousand-loads of cars ready to offer you. The **Lord of Red Charger** (**Agni**) please arrive at the site of **Yajna**.

Now take a close look at the following three distinct verses taken from the Last Mandala hymn, wherein the Poet speaks about the **making of different metres by the ancient Rishis**.

Rv-10.130,5: *virāṇ mitrāvaruṇayorabhiśrīrindrasya triṣṭub ihabhāgho ahnaḥ* |
viśvān devāñ jaghatyā viveśa ***tenacākḷipra ṛṣayo manuṣyāḥ*** ||

विराण्मित्रावरुणयोरभिश्रीरिन्द्रस्य त्रिष्टुबिह भागो अह्नः । विश्वान्देवाञ्जगत्या विवेश तेनं चाकॢप्र ऋषयो मनुष्याः ॥

Viraj adhered to **Varuna and Mitra**: here **Tristup** day by day was **Indra's** portion.
Jagati entered **all the Gods** together: **so by this knowledge men were raised to Rsis.**

Rv-10.130,6: *cākḷipre tena* ***ṛṣayo manuṣyā yajñe jāte pitaro*** *naḥ purāṇe* |
paśyan manye manasā cakṣasā tān ya imaṃyajñamayajanta pūrve ||

चाकॢप्रे तेन ऋषयो मनुष्या यज्ञे जाते पितरो नः पुराणे । पश्यंन्मन्ये मनसा चक्षसा तान्य इमं यज्ञमयंजन्त पूर्वे ॥

So by this **knowledge men were raised** to **Rsis**, **when ancient sacrifice sprang up**, **our Fathers**.
With the **mind's eye I think that I behold them who first performed this sacrificial worship**.

Rv-10130,7: ***sahastomāḥ sahachandasa*** *āvṛtaḥ* ***sahapramā ṛṣayaḥ saptadaivyāḥ*** |
pūrveṣāṃ panthāmanudṛśya dhīrā anvālebhirerathyo na raśmīn ||

सहस्तोमाः सहछंन्दस आवृतः सहप्रंमा ऋषयः सप्त दैव्याः । पूर्वेषां पन्थांमनुदृश्य धीरां अन्वालेंभिरे रथ्यो न रश्मीन् ॥

They who were versed in ritual and metre, in hymns and rules, were the **Seven Godlike Rsis**.
Viewing the path of those of old, the sages have taken up the reins like chariot-drivers.

Comment: Above three verses belong to the **Mandala-10** hymn wherein the Poet has briefly told the history of **creation** or **induction of Seven Metres/Chandaas** at the time of earliest **Yajna**. In the early part of **verse-5**, the Composer has linked **Viraj** (metre) to **Mitra-Varuna**; **Tristubh** to **Indra** and **Jagati** to **Visve-Deva** (all Gods). Then he credited the induction of these metres to the **knowledgeable men** of ancient time who are designated as the **Rishis**.

In the early part of the **verse-6**, the Composer has paid tribute to **his ancestors** (**पितरो**/ ***pitaro***) for the **creation of metres** in ancient times when the **Yajna ritual** was fashioned and added further to earlier story that **with the combination of his mind and eyes** he is able to **visualise** how this work would have been affectionately completed by the **ancient Rishis**.

In the **verse-7** of the hymn **Rv-10.130**; the Poet has highlighted the fact that the **Seven Divine Rishis** purposely incorporated the **Praise-songs** and **metres/Chandaas** in the **Yajna** ritual, and taking a clue from the work of ancient men, since then, the People of Priestly Community have been implicitly **following the path shown by their ancestors**. In other words, the **design of Seven Metres used by the Rigvedic Poets** was not the work of a single person as many **knowledgeable people/Rishis** of the **pre-Rigvedic time** were actively involved in the process of formation of these **seven metres** (***Sapta-Vani***).

The best part of the story is, since inception of **Yajna/sacrifice** ritual, **singing the songs of praise** in various metrical forms, was made the integral part of the sacred function. The contents of the verses of hymn **Rv-10.130** confirm the fact that **Yajna ritual was shaped after the creation of Seven Adityas** and the **warrior God Indra**, as the Poet of the said hymn has associated the induction of **Tristubh** metre specifically with the **Supreme God of Rigved**.

Other worth mentioning references of the term "Rishi"

Rv-8.16,7: इन्द्रों ब्रह्मेन्द्र ऋषिरिन्द्रः /***indro brahmendra ṛṣirindraḥ*** /**Indra** is the **Priest and Rishi.**

Rv-9.62,17: ऋषीणां सप्त धीतिभिः / ***ṛṣīṇāṃ sapta dhītibhiḥ***/ **Seven intelligent Rishis**.

Rv-9.68,7: ऋषिभिर्मतिभिर्धीतिभिर्हितम/ ***ṛṣibhirmatibhirdhītibhirhitam/*** **together with the Rishis**, with **their prayers and hymns**.

Rv-9.92,2: ऋषयः सप्त विप्राः /***ṛṣayaḥ sapta viprāḥ*** /**Rishis as the Seven Holy Singers**.

Rv-10.73,11: ***priyamedhā ṛṣayonādhamānāḥ/*** **Priyamedhas** the **Rishis**.

Important Features of the term "Rishi" described in the Rigvedic hymns

From the above information it is apparent that the **Rigvedic Poets** have used the word **Rishi** in the honour of a **Senior Priest who is an Inspired Poet** and **Singer** or **their ancestors** who framed the **seven metres and rules** for the composition of **Poems of Praise**.

Examples of Rigvedic Rishis who are from different Family backgrounds and Genders

1. The Mandala-8 Poet tells us that *Rishi Vatsa* is from the *Rishi Kanva* clan:

Following two verses convey us about the **real background of Rishi Vatsa**.

Rv-8.8,8: *kimanye paryāsate.asmat stomebhiraśvinā* |
putraḥ kaṇvasya *vāṃ* ***ṛṣirghīrbhirvatso*** *avīvṛdhat* ||

Do others more than we adore **the Asvins with their hymns of praise**?

The **Rsi Vatsa, Kanva's son**, **hath magnified you with his songs.**

Rv-8.8,11: *ataḥ sahasranirṇijā rathenā yātamaśvinā* |
vatso *vāṃ madhumad* ***vaco****.aśaṃsīt* ***kāvyaḥ kaviḥ*** ||

Come thence, **O Asvins**, on your car that hath a thousand ornaments.

Vatsa the sage, the sage's son, hath **sung a song of sweets to you**.

Comment: Contents of the above verses make it clear that **Rishi Vatsa belongs to Kanva clan** and he is **Poet** and **the son of Poet** (**काव्यः कविः**). It means to say that **Rishi's son** is also **Rishi**.

2. Ghosha, the female Rishi who composed two hymns, is from the Warrior clan:

Poet Ghosha the composer of hymns **Rv-10.39** & **40** has talked about herself.

Rv-10.40,5: *yuvāṃ ha ghoṣā paryaśvinā yatī* ***rājña ūce duhitāpṛche vāṃ narā*** |
bhūtaṃ me ahna uta bhūtamaktave'śvāvate rathine śaktamarvate ||

To you, O **Asvins**, **came the daughter of a King, Ghosa**, and said, O Heroes, this I beg of you.

Be near me in the day, he near me in the night: help me to gain a car-borne chieftain rich in steeds.

Rv-10.39,6: *iyaṃ vāmahve śṛṇutaṃ me* ***aśvinā putrāyeva pitarā*** *mahyaṃśikṣatam* |
anāpirajñā asajātyāmatiḥ *purā tasyāabhiśasterava spṛtam* ||

Listen to me, O **Asvins**; I have cried to you. Give me-your aid as **sire** and **mother aid their son**.

Poor, **without kin** or **friend** or **ties of blood** am I. Save me before it be too late, from this my curse.

Comment: In the verse **Rv-10.40,5 Ghosha** the **Woman Poet** informs us that **she is the daughter of the king**. In the verse **Rv-10.39,6** she talks about the **giving up the Royal lifestyle** (means renounced all relations) and the acceptance of **ascetic life** to become a **Priest/Rishi**.

C. Sumedha/सुमेधा:

Sumedha/सुमेधा is the Rigvedic term primarily means "wisdom," "wise," or "a person of excellent intellect". Basically, **Su (सु)** means "good" or "excellent" and **Medha (मेधा)** means "wisdom," "intellect," or "intelligence". When both words are joined together, then they stand for "one who possesses great or excellent wisdom." As the Composer of **Vak-Suktam** in the verse **Rv-10.125,5** has used the said term with some specific purpose, therefore, it can be said that the term **Sumedha/सुमेधा** implies the **Senior member of Priestly Community** who is considered by many as the " **very intelligent** or **wise speaker** and possesses a **great vision**".

In other words, for the Priestly people of Rigvedic era, **Sumedha/सुमेधा** was a very special but **spiritual personality** who was also a **powerful speaker**. A person who has **deep thinking ability,** hence possesses **philosophical insight**, shows **keen interest in upgrading** the **understanding of Universal** through the **improved knowledge of Rta** and **strives hard to update vocabulary of the archaic language** and follows "**think before speak**" model throughout his life is nothing but **Sumedha/सुमेधा**.

After examination of various Rigvedic verses pertaining to the term **Sumedha/सुमेधा**, it has been observed that the Rigvedic Poets have employed the said term for both, some of the **Deities of their Imaginations** and the **selected members of Priestly Community**. **Table-1** provides the information compiled from the hymns wherein the term **Sumedha/सुमेधा** has been specifically used for different Rigvedic Gods by the various Poets.

Table-1: Application of the term "Sumedha/सुमेधा" for various Rigvedic Gods

Rigvedic God to whom the Poets have addressed as "*Sumedha*"	**Related Verse numbers**
Agni	**Rv-2.3,1; Rv-3.15,5; RV-6.67,8; Rv-10.45,7**
Soma	**Rv-8.48,1**
Brihaspati	**Rv-10.47,6; Rv-10.65,10**
Soma Pavamana	**Rv-9.92,3; Rv-9.93,3; Rv-9.97,23**

From the **Table-1**, it is clear that the said term is found in some of the **Early Mandalas** (**Mandala-2**, **3**, and **6**) and some **Late Mandalas (Mandala-8, 9 and 10)** of **Rigved**, and hence it can be concluded that it was known to **many Rigvedic Priests** since the beginning of the **Rigvedic period**.

Now we will take up some verses in which the Composers have employed the term **Sumedha/सुमेधा** for the **members of the Priestly Community**.

Rv-3.38,1: *abhi **taṣṭeva** dīdhayā manīṣāmatyo na vājī sudhuro jihānaḥ* |
*abhi **priyāṇi** marmṛśat parāṇi **kavīnrichāmi sandṛśe sumedhāḥ*** ||

अभि तष्टेव दीधया मनीषामत्यो न वाजी सुधुरो जिहानः । अभि प्रियाणि मर्मृशत्परांणि कवींरिच्छामि संदृशे सुमेधाः ॥

Hasting like some strong courser good at drawing, a thought have I imagined like a workman.

Pondering what is dearest and most noble, I long to see the **sages full of wisdom**.

Comment: The Poet of the above verse imagines himself as a **craftsman** (**तष्ट**) and draws the inspiration from the swift moving courser who when properly yoked to pole, carries physical load (of a wagon/car) on its shoulder. The Poet then visualises, from a distance, as the dearest and supreme being (Indra) is watching **him working hard** (like a courser running in a race), (the God) would provide him the **wisdom** or **visions** needed for **his Poetic activities**.

Rv-1.185,10: ***ṛtaṃ** dive tadavocaṃ pṛthivyā abhiśrāvāya prathamaṃ **sumedhāḥ*** |
*pātāmavadyād duritādabhīke **pitā mātā** ca rakṣatāmavobhiḥ* ||

ऋतं दिवे तदवोचं पृथिव्या अभिश्रावाय प्रथमं सुमेधाः । पातामवद्याद्दुरितादभीके पिता माता च रक्षतामवोभिः ॥

Endowed with understanding, I have uttered this truth, for all to hear, to Earth and Heaven.

Be near us, keep us from reproach and trouble. **Father and Mother, with your help preserve us**.

Comment: The Composer of the above verse declares himself as the **wisest person** (**"Sumedha/सुमेधा"**) as he claims to have proper understanding of **Rta/ ऋत/Cosmic Laws** the **first principle of Vedic Philosophy** and hence can speak to **Heaven and Earth** with full confidence. He then appeals to **Father** and **Mother** (of the Deities) to give necessary help and protect the Priests from all sorts of trouble. It means to say that **appropriate knowledge of Rta/ ऋत is a must** to qualify any **Inspired Poet**/**Senior Priest** as **Sumedha**.

In the following four verses of the hymn **Rv-10.62**; the Composer has used the term **Sumedha/सुमेधा** to identify the **Angirasas** (the descendants of **ancient Rishi Angiras**) as the **possessors of high wisdom** (means **insightful thinker**).

Rv-10.62,1: *ye yajñena dakṣiṇayā samaktā indrasya sakhyamamṛtatvamānaśa* |
*tebhyo **bhadramaṅgiraso v**o astu prati gṛbhṇītamānavaṃ **sumedhasaḥ*** ||

ये यज्ञेन दक्षिणया समक्ता इन्द्रस्य सख्यममृतत्वमानश । तेभ्यो भद्रमङ्गिरसो वो अस्तु प्रतिं गृभ्णीत मानवं सुमेधसः ॥

Ye, who, adorned with guerdon through the sacrifice, have won you Indra's friendship and eternal life,
Even to you be happiness, **Angirases.** Welcome the **son of Manu**, **ye who are most wise**.

Rv-10.62,2: *ya udājan **pitaro** gomayaṃ vasv **ṛtenābhindan** parivatsarevalam |*
*dīrghāyutvam**aṅgiraso** vo astu prati ghṛbhṇītamānavaṃ **sumedhasaḥ** ||*

य उदाजन्पितरो गोमयं वस्वृतेनाभिन्दन्परिवत्सरे वलम् । दीर्घायुत्वमङ्गिरसो वो अस्तु प्रतिं गृभ्णीत मानवं सुमेधसः ॥

The Fathers, who drave forth the wealth in cattle, have in the year's **courses cleft Vala by Eternal Law**.
A lengthened life be yours, O ye **Angirases**. **Welcome the son of Manu, ye who are most wise**.

Rv-10.62,3: *ya **ṛtena** sūryamārohayan divyaprathayan pṛthivīṃ mātaraṃvi |*
*suprajā stvam**aṅgiraso** vo astu prati ghṛbhṇīta mānavaṃ **sumedhasaḥ** ||*

य ऋतेन सूर्यमारोहयन्दिव्यप्रथयन्पृथिवीं मातरं वि । सुप्रजास्त्वमङ्गिरसो वो अस्तु प्रतिं गृभ्णीत मानवं सुमेधसः ॥

Ye raised the Sun to heaven by **everlasting Law**, and spread broad earth, the Mother, out on every side.
Fair wealth of progeny be yours, **Angirases**. Welcome the **son of Manu, ye who are most wise**.

Rv-10.62,4: *ayaṃ nābhā vadati valghu vo gṛhe devaputrā **ṛṣaya**stacchṛṇotana |*
*subrahmaṇyam**aṅgiraso** vo astu prati gṛbhṇītamānavaṃ **sumedhasaḥ** ||*

अयं नाभा वदति वल्गु वो गृहे देवपुत्रा ऋषयस्तच्छृणोतन । सुब्रह्मण्यमङ्गिरसो वो अस्तु प्रतिं गृभ्णीत मानवं सुमेधसः ॥

This kinsman in your dwelling place speaks pleasant words: give car to this, ye **Rsis**, **children of the Gods**.
High Brahman dignity be yours, **Angirases. Welcome the son of Manu, ye who are most wise**.

Comment: The Poet in the above four verses has designated the **Angirasas the sons of Manu** (men) as **Sumedhas/ the most wise Men** who developed **close bonding with Indra** through regularly worshipping the God in Yajna, and hence became immortals. They also destroyed the **caves of Vala;** made the **Sun to ascend to Heaven** and **spread Mother Earth on all sides**. And all these things happened only due to their **profound knowledge of Rta/ ऋत.** In the **verse-4**, the Poet has called all of them (**Angirasas**) as the **Rishis**, the children of Gods, the **highly placed Brahmanas** who are **the wisest** among the many Priests.

The salient features of the Rigvedic character **Sumedha/सुमेधा** are as follows.

- **Deep** or **Insightful Thinker** and the **effective user of Wisdom**.
- **Has proper understanding of Rta/ ऋत** and the **promoter of new Ideas**.
- **Inspirational Speaker** and hence **has a long-lasting Influence on the Priests**.
- A **Senior Rishi who sets a new vision** and **mission for the Priestly Community**.

D. Discussion on the Rigvedic terms "Brahmin, Rishi and Sumedha":

Having independently studied the important characteristic features of the three Rigvedic characters mentioned in the verse **Rv-10.125,5**; now it time to bring these three distinct designations belonging to the **Priestly Community of Rigved** on a common platform to understand their inter-relationships and rankings. In the beginning of this section, we would look into some special aspects brought out by the different Composers on the terms **Brahmana/Brahmin** and **Rishi**.

The Composer of **Purusha-Sukta** in the verse **Rv-10.90,12** has described that the **Brahmana is born from the mouth of Purusha**. For all practical purposes, this statement can be re-interpreted as the **Brahmana** takes **birth in a family** where **Yajna ritual** is traditionally performed by the family members and where the **mantras (divine Vak)** are **regularly uttered**. In other words, **by birth**, a **Brahmin boy** often listens to the **chants /praise-songs** composed (by a family member or other Priest) in the **archaic Sanskrit language**, and the **Divine Speech/Vak** is not a new thing for him.

In the verse given below, the **Mandala-7** Poet has narrated the story of **Vasistha** (**Senior**) becoming **Rishi**.

Rv-7.88,4: ***vasiṣṭhaṃ*** *ha* ***varuṇo nāvyādhād ṛṣiṃ*** *cakāra svapā mahobhiḥ* |
stotāraṃ vipraḥ *sudinatve ahnāṃ yān nu dyāvastatanan yāduṣāsaḥ* ||

Varuna placed Vasistha in the vessel, and **deftly with his might made him a Rsi**.
When **days shone bright** the **Sage made him a singer**, while the **heavens broadened** and the **Dawns were lengthened**.

Considering the role of **Varuna** as a myth, then from the content of above verse, it can be easily inferred that **unlike Brahmin**, "a **<u>Rishi is made and not born"</u>**.

Now take a serious look at the content of the following verse taken from the famous hymn "**Suryaa's Bridal/** ***Sūryā Vīvāha Sūktam***"of the ***Last Mandala of Rigved***.

Rv-10.85,29: *parā dehi śāmulyaṃ* ***brahmabhyo vi bhajā vasu*** |
kṛtyaiṣāpadvatī bhūtvyā ***jāyā viśate patim*** ||

Give thou the woollen robe away: **deal treasure to the Brahman priests**.
This female fiend hath got her feet, and as a **wife attends her lord**.

The Composer of above verse implicitly informs us that when a newly married bride/wife first time goes to the house of her husband for physical union to produce progeny, then after their first mating, the **Brahmins** collect their robes to inspect for the presence of blood stains on them. If the red stains are seen on the garments, means the bride is virgin and then the **Brahmins** declare that the marriage is valid.

Above narration points out the fact that it is the **Brahmanas/Brahmins who attended** or **performed the household functions** like **marriages** and other ceremonies held in the **families of the common people** and **not the Rishis**.

Presence of the terms "Brahmana and Rishi" in the same verse

Three verses taken from the **hymns of Last Mandala of Rigved** exhibit the presence of both terms, **Brahmana** and **Rishi** in them.

Rv-10.47,3: ***subrahmāṇaṃ devavantaṃ*** *bṛhantamuruṃ gabhīraṃ pṛthubudhnamindra* |
*śruta**ṛṣimugrama**bhimātiṣāhamasmabhyaṃ citraṃvṛṣaṇaṃ rayiṃ dāḥ* ||

Wealth, with **good Brahmans**, Indra! God-attended, high, wide, and deep, arid based on broad foundation.
Strong, **with famed Rsis**, conquering our foemen: vouchsafe us mighty and resplendent riches.

Rv-10.89,16: *purūṇi hi tvā savanā* ***janānāṃ brahmāṇi*** *mandan* ***gṛṇatāmṛṣīṇām*** |
imāmāghoṣannavasā sahūtiṃ tiro viśvānarcato yāhyarvāṃ ||

May **plentiful libations of the people**, and **singing Rsis' holy prayers rejoice thee**.
Hearing with love this **common invocation**, come unto us, **pass by all those who praise thee**.

Rv-10.107,6: *tameva* ***ṛṣiṃ tamu brahmāṇamāhuryajñanyaṃ*** *sāmaghāmukthaśāsam* |
sa śukrasya tanvo veda tisro yaḥ prathamodakṣiṇayā rarādha ||

They call him **Rsi, Brahman**, **Sama-chanter, reciter of the laud**, **leader of worship**.
The brightly-shining God's three forms he **knoweth who first bestowed the sacrificial Guerdon**.

Comment: Poet of the verse **Rv-10.47,3** tells **Indra** that he has arrived there in the company of **Good Brahmanas**, **many Gods** (**सुब्रह्माणं देववन्तं**) and **well-known Rishis** who represent the wide and broad sections of the **society** or **beings.** They have already conquered their enemies/defeated opponents. Hence the God should give them mighty and abundant wealth.

Through the verse **Rv-10.89,16** ; the Composer tells **Indra**, in presence of many people, the **Brahmins with their chants** and the **Rishis with their Songs** are offering you **Soma** in a large quantity specifically to make you happy. **Indra** please pay visit to our place of worship, listen to our common prayer, and enjoy the offerings with collective chants. It means that a large gathering of **Common People**, **Brahmanas** and **Rishis** was involved in **Soma ritual**.

The verse **Rv-10.107,6** belongs to the hymn composed to praise **Dakshina** (gifts given to the Priests) in which the Poet has taken the names of several participants involved in **Yajna ritual** such as **Rishi**, **Brahmana the caller** or **inviter of Yajna (*brahmāṇamāhuryajñanyaṃ)***, **Sama chanter**, the **Head Priest** or the leader of Yajna ritual, and **the Speaker of good words** (an anchor or host?) etc. Here the role of **Brahmana** is to **invite the patrons** or **donors** for a **special Yajna** who are supposed to give gifts to all Priests. In the second line of the verse, the Poet says that the person who offers sacrifices to sacred fire is given the first gift by the patron.

From the contents of these three verses, it is clear that both **Brahmin** and **Rishi** played distinct roles in **Yajna ritual**. Generally, **Brahmana/Brahmin** is engaged in **many peripheral activities** like preparing the fire altar, inviting the guests, pressing Soma and chanting mantras under the guidance of Senior Priest etc., whereas the **Rishi** has to **sing the song/hymn composed by him to praise** the **Deity** to be invoked at the time of particular Yajna ceremony.

Poet learns about Rta/the Celestial Laws from his Father

Rv-8.6,10: *ahamid **dhi pituṣ pari medhāṃ ṛtasya** jaghrabha | ahaṃ **sūrya ivājani** ||*

I from my Father have received deep knowledge of the Holy Law.
I was born like **unto the Sun**.

Comment: The Poet from **Kanva** family says that he received proper knowledge about **Rta/celestial laws** from his **Father**. He further says that **he was born like the Sun** means born in the family of the **Light seeking Priest/Arya** or **knowledge-oriented clan**. It means to say that traditionally, the information about the **ancient Vedic Philosophy** which actually began with the **concept of Rta**; was systematically but orally transferred from **Father to Son**.

As discussed earlier, the Composer from **Kanva clan** in the verse **Rv-8.8,8**; has told us Poet **Vatsa is Rishi and the son of Kanva (Rishi)**. In addition to this, same Composer in the verse **Rv-8.8,11** from the same hymn; has informed us that **Vatsa is the Poet, and Son of the Poet**. It means to say that, Senior **Rishi** (**Kanva**) who **himself** was the **Inspired Poet**, would have brought up **his son** to make him **Poet** and hence **Rishi**.

Even though, while praising **history of the Kanva clan**, the **Poet from Kanva family** has declared **Vatsa** as the **Rishi**, however, we find the **origin of clan culture** in the **Five Early Mandalas of Rigved**. It is well-known thing that the **Poets from the Five Different Families** have composed the **First Five Family Mandalas of Rigved** as given in **Table-2**.

Table-2: **Mandala-wise**, kings of **Bharata clan** and the **names of families of Composers**

Mandala Number	Name of the Bharata King	The Lead Composer
2	**Bharata**	**Grtsamada**
3	**Devasravasa/Devashravas**	**Visvamitra/Vishvamitra**
4	**Srnjaya/Shrinjaya**	**Vamadeva Gotama**
6	**Divodasa**	**Bharadwaja**
7	**Sudasa**	**Vasistha**

Please note that each of these **Five Mandalas** has been composed by **many Poets** belonging to a **particular Family** and hence they are popularly known as the **Family Mandalas**. Moreover, it can be assumed the Leader (s) of these **Five Families** would have worked as the **Royal Priests** for the particular king of the **Bharata Family**. Surprisingly, we do not find the **cross references** of the **names of Composers** of **each of these Mandalas** in **other Family Mandalas**. It means to say that, the **Lead Composer** would have taken a firm decision not to give place to the Poets from Other Families. As the **Family Composers** were the **Inspired Poets**, hence for all practical purposes, they can be termed as the **Rishis**.

However, **Mandala-5;** despite being the **Family Mandala** (as most of the hymns of this Mandala are composed by the Poets belonging to **Rishi Atri Family**), does not find its place in the **Table-2**. This is because, like the **First Five Early Family Mandalas**, we do not find a **single ruler** either from **Bharata clan** or **any other warrior clan** during whose regime, **Rishi Atri** and **his descendants** would have acted as the **Royal Priests** for that particular king and then composed most of the hymns of **Mandala-5**.

As a matter of fact, **Mandala-7** (the **Last among the Five Early Mandalas**) and **Mandala-5** (the **First among the Five Late Mandalas of Rigved**) share some common features like mention of the rivers like **Saraswati**, **Yamuna**, **Parushni** in both of them; as well as references of **Bharata/Bharatas** and the presence of the word ***Sudase*** in the verse **Rv-5.53,2** generally translated by most of Vedic Scholars as **bounteous man** or **good giver** and did not identify the term as **Bharata king Sudasa of Mandala-7**. Additionally, in both Mandalas there is reference of **Puru king Trasadasyu** the **son of Purukutsa,** and the **grandson of Durgaha**. Other hymnic overlapping features noticed in **Mandala-7** and **5** are given at **Appendix "A"**.

Presence of the terms "Brahmana, Rishi and Sumedha" in a single verse

Rv-10.62,4: *ayaṃ **nābhā vadati valgu** vo gṛhe devaputrā **ṛṣayast**acchṛṇotana* |
subrahmaṇyamaṅgiraso** vo astu prati gṛbhṇītamānavaṃ **sumedhasaḥ ||

This kinsman in your dwelling place **speaks pleasant words**: give car to this, ye **Rsis**, **children of the Gods**.
High Brahman dignity be yours, **Angirases**. Welcome **the son of Manu**, ye **who are most wise**.

Comment: The Composer of above verse has specifically highlighted the **members of the Angirasa Family** as the **Rishis**, **Good Brahmanas** and the **Wisest People /Sumedha** as they had command over the **divine speech** (known as the excellent speakers and influencers). Additionally, the **Angirasas** have been identified as the **children of Gods** and the **lovely human beings** (the descendants of Manu**)**. It means to say that here the Poet has decorated the **Angirasas** with **all three distinct titles** mentioned in the verse **Rv-10.125,5**:

In short;

- **Brahmana** was the **workhorse of the Priestly Community** as he was regularly engaged in making preparation of **Yajna ritual** including **Soma pressing** and serving the same to the guests. It means that the **team of Brahmins** used to perform multi-tasks such as chanting of mantras composed by old Poets, preparation of fire altar etc.
- **Rishi** being the **Inspired Poet**, was the **Composer and the Singer** of the **new praise-songs** specifically composed for a **special Yajna ceremony**. He was also the **Guru/teacher** of the **Brahmana/Brahmin boys**.
- **Sumedha** being the **Senior Rishi** based on his **knowledge** and **past experience** served as the **Guide** and **Philosopher** for all the members of Priestly Community.

Based on the above discussion it can be said that initially, **almost all Rishis** worked as the Brahmanas/Brahmins, but **all Brahmanas** could not become the **Rishis**.

Similarly, every **Sumedha** was a **Rishi earlier,** however every **Rishi** could not achieve the status of **Sumedha**.

Ideally speaking, **Brahmana**, **Rishi** and **Sumedha** were the **knowledge seekers** as each of them exhibited keen interest in **knowing the Universal truth/Rta**.

The main attributes of the **belief system** developed by the **pre–Rigvedic Rishis** that included the fashioning of a new warrior god **Indra** and the formulation of **Yajna procedure which ultimately led to the Composition** of the **Ten Mandalas of Rigved** are as follows**.**

1. **Rigvedic Priests** strongly believed that **Vedic Deities** love the **knowledge seekers**.
2. Practically speaking, a **knowledge seeker** is an individual who exhibits keen interest in understanding the **Universal truth** or **Celestial laws** or **Rta** th**e first principle of Vedic Philosophy. Rigvedic Poets** have called that person as the **Light Seeking Arya.**
3. For the members of Priestly Community**, seeking Knowledge** was a way of life.
4. The ancestors of the Rigvedic Priests devised a new method of worship that is known as **Yajna rite** mainly to please various **Deities of their Imaginations** so as to win their favour to solve the day-to-day problems faced by the people of Vedic Society.
5. **Rigved** informs us that all those who have faith in Vedic Deities must strive hard to learn **Yajna ritual** as the main goal of their life with the single-minded devotion.
6. **Brahmana/Brahmin** needs to give the topmost priority **to learn** the **tenets of Vedic Philosophy** since beginning including various beliefs and practices.
7. **Rishi**, the **Senior Priest** who is capable to **compose a new praise-song** and hence qualify as the **Guru / Teacher** to educate the young **Brahmanas/Brahmins** in the area of **Yajna ceremony** to prepare the next generation Priests.
8. **Sumedha,** the **Senior Rishi** beings the **insightful thinker**, possesses **higher level of knowledg**e & **wisdom (sageness)** and has **better understanding of Rta**, and hence acts as the **guide** and **philosopher** for the members of Priestly Community.

The **three distinct terms** used by the Poet of the verse **Rv-10.125,5** which have been discussed in detail in the present note are summarised in the form of **Table-3**.

Table-3

Title used for the Priestly Character as depicted in the verse Rv-10.125,5	**Description/Explanation about the Rigvedic term/title**
<u>Brahmana/Brahmin</u> Who has gone through **अध्ययन/** ***Adhyayan*** phase. (a person properly trained in **Priestly** or **Purohit activities**)	An **interested pupil** (Brahmin) who has been taught about the ancient Vedic Doctrine and has undergone extensive training in the field of **Yajna ritual** and **reciting mantras** or songs composed by the **Old Rishis** or **Senior Priests**.
<u>Rishi</u> Who has reached **मनन/** ***Manan*** phase/ **Vedic Scholar**/**Acharya**. (acts as ***Guru***/teacher for **Brahmins** and can be termed as ***Pundit***)	A **Senior Priest** who has thorough **knowledge of Yajna ritual** and also **possesses the excellent Poetic skills** including proper knowledge of various types of **metres used** for the composition of the **Praise-song.**
<u>Sumedha</u> Who has attained **चिंतन**/***Chintan*** phase/Spiritual Leader/Master**.** **(तत्त्वज्ञानी/** ***Tatvagyan***i)	**Very Senior Rishis** who is an independent but **insightful** or **deep thinker,** hence could be termed as **प्राज्ञ/ तत्त्वज्ञ** or **Philosopher** in the present-day language (**sagacious leader**).

The most interesting part of **Rigved** is some **Last Mandala Composers** have seriously tried to resolve the issue of complex nature of celestial truths (**Rta**) including creation of the Universe, and its major elements (all Living and Non-living things found in the world) through the induction of different divine characters like **Vishvakarman**, **Prajapati**, **Purusha** etc. As per information available in the hymn **Rv-10.130**; the **ancestors** of **Rigvedic Poets** have also been designated as the **Rishis** in the text. The **beauty of Rigved** is the **Rishis** transferred the essence of divine knowledge to their next generations through these Poems/hymns to the **Brahmins** who showed keen interest in learning the same from their seniors. Moreover, some new generation Poets definitely added several new ideas to the existing knowledge and also made it a point to preserve the history, geography, moral, social and ethical values established by the **pre-Rigvedic** and **Rigvedic Priests** as the **Ideals**.

E. References:

1. **"Rig Veda" (Bilingual), Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith (1896) in PDF.**
2. **Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English dictionary.**
3. **General Information sourced from Internet/Public Domain.**

Appendix "A"

When the lately composed and/or arranged hymns (specifically the hymns numbered **greater than 50**) of **Mandala-7** and **Mandala-5** are studied and compared together, then we find some **similar features** or a **similar pattern** of the **praise-songs** dedicated to the **Identical Deities** composed by the Composers belonging to the two separate families (**Vasistha** and **Atri** respectively) and the collected information is given in the **Table-4**.

Table-4: Similar features noticed in the hymns of Mandala-7 and 5 (hymns above -50)

Name of the Rigvedic Deity to whom several hymns are addressed	Mandala-7 hymn numbers (total number of hymns)	Mandala-5 hymn numbers (total number of hymns)
Maruts	**Rv-7.56 to 59 (4)**	**Rv-5.52 to 61 (10)**
Mitra-Varuna	**Rv-7.60 to 66 (7)**	**Rv-5.62 to 73 (12)**
Asvins	**Rv-7.67 to 74 (8)**	**Rv-5.74 to 78 (5)**
Usha/Dawn	**Rv-7.75 to 81 (7)**	**Rv-5.79 to 81 (3)**
Varuna	**Rv-7.86 to 89 (4)**	**Rv-5.85 (1)**
Indra-Agni	**Rv-7,93 & 94 (2)**	**Rv-5.86 (1)**
Parjanya	**Rv-7.101 & 102 (2)**	**Rv-5,83 (1)**

Please note that;

After their loss in the **War of Ten kings** (see hymn **Rv-7.18**), the **Leaders of Five Tribes** accepted **Indra** as their **Supreme God** (refer to verses **Rv-5.32,11** & **Rv-5.35,2**).

Hymns devoted to god **Parjanya** are found **only in Mandala-7** and **Mandala-5.**

Based on the information placed in **Table-4**, it can be said that the **Poets from Vasistha Family** would have influenced the **Composers of Atri clan**. Therefore, it can be concluded that, in the order of composition of **Ten Mandalas of Rigved**, **Mandala-7** (**Vasistha Mandala**) was followed by **Mandala-5** (**Atri Mandala**).